

"CALLED"



HAT, you here, Sandy?" The old acquaintance put out a hand in greeting, and the little Scotsman stopped to wipe his oily fingers on a corner of his blouse before he took it. "How long have you been at this job?"

"Glad tae see ye, Mr. Humphrey; glad tae see ye," the sexton said, and his tone was as hearty as his words. "I minded this lamp behind the pulpit gied but a puir licht last Sawbath evenin', so I stole a spare minute tae rin doon and set a new wick in it. Yes, I've been here quite a spell, Mr. Humphrey. I was called tae tek the oversight of this church three years ago come December, sir."

The acquaintance smiled as he passed on. Sandy's show of dignity was amusing, the more that he was such a tiny wisp of a man, with his narrow, bent shoulders and his ill-kept, calloused hands, greasy with lamp oil. "*Called.*" The minister of the parish might have used the word fitly enough. But why not the sexton, too? An underheated church might spoil the effect of the most carefully prepared sermon, and even a sputtering lamp, such as Sandy was pottering about, might be a distracting annoyance.

The story is not new, but the suggestion it carries cannot be too often repeated. Most of us take it for granted that great men like Moses and Paul and Martin Luther and John Knox and Washington and Abraham Lincoln were "called" to leadership. We are accustomed to say that God prepares a man for the particular crisis, and fits him to march in the forefront, and carry the movement forward to a successful issue. By analogy, but with possibly more reserve, we speak of a young man being "called" to the ministry or a minister in service being "called" to the pastorate of a particular church.

What we often overlook is that where a man is called to lead other men must be called to follow. Skilled leadership is more impressive and spectacular than loyal following, but either is useless without the other. Moses had misgivings as to his own ability to head so great a movement as the emancipation of Israel, but he had misgivings, too, as to the response the people would make to his leadership.

Where exact coördination is so essential, where faithfulness and unquestioning obedience and painstaking attention to detail count for so much in the rank and file, it goes without saying that these humble, subordinate places are not left to any mere chance comer. The little Scottish sexton was not amiss in saying that he was "called" to such minor tasks as dusting pews and trimming lamps; for even the lowliest work, faithfully and conscientiously done, is invested with all the dignity of a heavenly calling.

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